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intended more as an excuse for people to enter the house and have a talk than with any idea of making a profit. Whatever money is drawn is regarded as a kind of pin-money for the mistress of the establishment. When the ladies of the household are in earnest about trading, they start a stall in the bazaar, and very good hands they are at driving a bargain. A more regrettable trait is the forcible character of their language when they are annoyed. But this, unhappily, is a characteristic of the fair sex all the world over, whether in trade or out of it. Certain it is that the *dames de la halle* and the Billingsgate fishwives would require all their powers of voice and vituperation to silence a bazaar maiden when she sets her mind to it.

There are as a general thing two meals only in the day: breakfast at about eight in the morning, and dinner at five in the afternoon. There is no difference in the *menu* of the two meals. The staple article of food is plain boiled rice, which is piled up in a heap on a huge platter, round about which the household arrange themselves, sitting, like pit-men, on their heels. The curry which is taken with it is placed in little bowls, and each one of the party has his own plate, and helps himself. Knives are unnecessary; spoons and forks and celestial chopsticks are unknown, except in the houses of a few Government officials and traders in Rangoon, who have had some experience of English society. Very few are able to afford curries of meat or fish, besides that there are not always unscrupulous people ready to disregard the law against taking life, and the material is therefore not always available. Ordinarily the curry consists of a soup, or thin concoction of vegetables, in which chillies and onions figure largely. The other ingredients are very various. Young shoots of bamboo are very delicate in their flavour, if not overpowered by too much garlic. Wild asparagus, the succulent stems of a number of aquatic plants and fleshy arums are constantly used, and may be seen exposed for sale in every bazaar. Tamarind leaves and those of the mango-tree are used by the very poor. The former have a somewhat acrid taste, the latter are curiously aromatic. Along with the curry, which has always a large amount of oil and salt in it, there are a variety of condiments, notably the

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792 [293] dozen or more solemn-visaged monks sitting on their mats and coyly hiding their faces behind these big fans is apt to raise a smile on the face of a foreigner. But there is no doubt that the regulation is well advised. Women are disturbers of tranquil meditation.

792 346 561 When these necessaries have been provided, the candidate proceeds to the appointed building. This is always a thein, a consecrated hall, built of teak, with open sides and the sacred three, five, or seven overlapping and diminishing roofs, not unlike the Albert Memorial in appearance, but much larger at the base. Here the examining body is assembled to the number of ten or twelve, ordinarily, but a minimum of four will suffice if the ceremony is conducted in the jungle. The senior is appointed upyitsi, or president, and a secretary is nominated, whose duty it is to bring forward the candidate and to read the Kammawāsā, the ritual of ordination. This is the most gorgeously ornamented of all the Burmese books. It is written, not in the ordinary round character, but in square letters painted on with a thick black resinous gum, and requires a special education to read it. The leaves are formed either of the ordinary palm-leaf, thickly covered with red lacquer, and profusely ornamented round the border and between the lines with gilded figures of nats and elaborate scroll-work, or in the case of the more sacred monasteries, of the discarded waistcloths of kings. None might wear these pasos after the Great King of Righteousness had tired of them, and many were therefore made use of for this purpose. Portions of them are taken, doubled over, and then covered with numerous coatings of wood-oil and a paste composed of this same thitsi, with finely sifted burnt rice-husks, sawdust, and rice-water, until at last they become firm as a piece of cardboard, but vastly more pliant. Then the sheets are emblazoned, and the text painted on, the whole being enclosed between richly ornamented teak boards. Few more splendid-looking manuscripts can be seen anywhere. Occasionally copies are found engrossed on thin sheets of ivory or copper, but those on the royal pasos, called Wut-lè Kammawāsās, are most highly esteemed. The text is always read in a peculiar way, in a high-pitched, jerky recitative, which is not without a certain impressive effect.

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O that curve in the round arm!
It has wrought men grievous harm.
Like the sylphs when they're at play,
Like the maids of Mandalay,
Without display
In everyday
Quiet dresses they
Are busked and gay
As the daughters of the palace, as the maidens of the skies
In their natural, their usual array.

O! could I but sing what I think,
My heart would no more on the brink
Of despairing love struggle and sink,
Ye maidens to heavens the link;
Each passer-by
Who casts his eye
Upon the buxom Hanthawaddy girls,
Though he be sage,
His feelings wage
Fierce war within his brain-pan till it whirls.

Dewa daughters, fair, fair,
Rosebud fairies, ware, ware,
Born men's hearts to snare, snare,
Can I paint your ways,
Better sound your praise,
In verse
That's terse
Than thus: You're fair as any maid in Mandalay.

Barani is a daughter of nats, corresponding very much to the classical Flora. [832]

Madi, the spouse of Prince Wethandaya, is always regarded as the model wife. [593]

Amè! "mother!" is the invariable exclamation of all Burmans on all possible occasions of astonishment, anger, doubt, or delight. [201]

The name Hanthawaddy, properly applied to the whole province, is, in songs, usually employed to designate Rangoon, for rhythmical more than any other reason, just as Mamye, or Mye, or Man stands for Mandalay. [195]

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"Rosebud fairies," called bôngyo, are daughters of nats, who having stayed in the country of the dêwas for a thousand years, are obliged to come down to the seat of man again.

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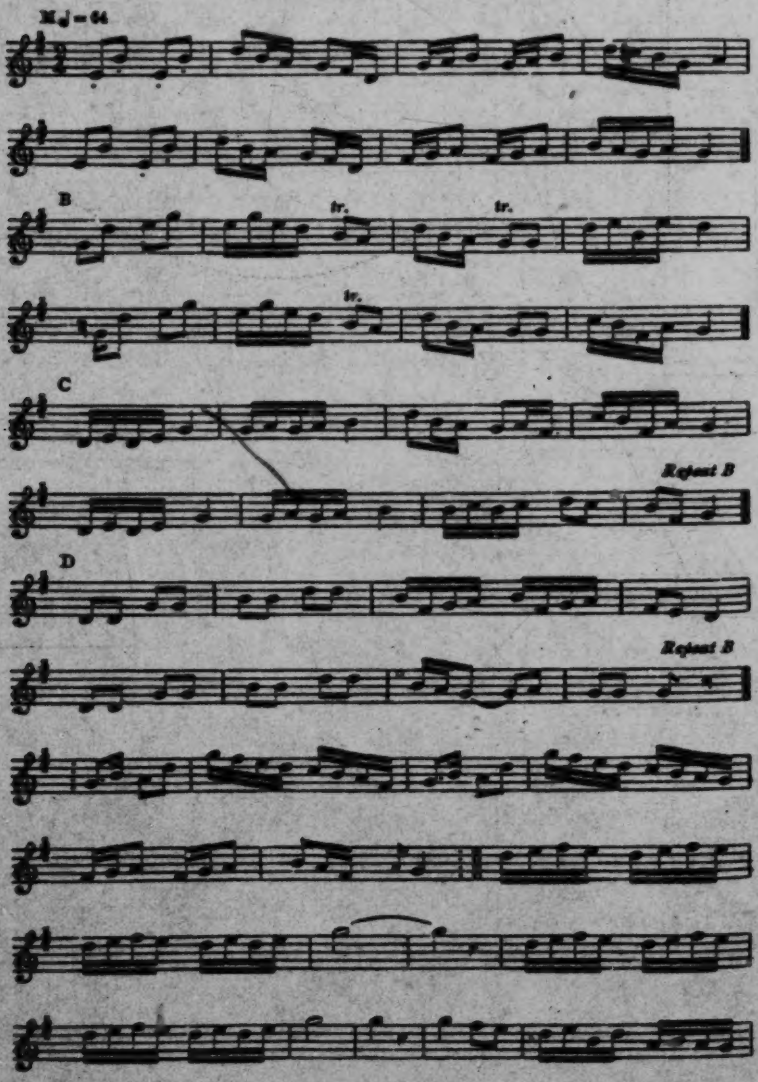
They are born from roses. Such charming houris apparently particularly affect Rangoon.

The following is the score as written down by Mr. St. Clair, now and for many years, editor of the *Singapore Free Press*:—

KAYA-THAN



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CHAPTER LX

THE LANGUAGE

193 194 THE Burmese language is monosyllabic, and is therefore, like all the other monosyllabic languages, forced into the tonic system on account of the limited number of combinations of which the consonants admit. The multitude of meanings which a slight difference of accentuation gives to an otherwise identical sound is the greatest difficulty which a stranger has to contend with in studying the language, and never fails to land the beginner in a most embarrassing maze of complications. The modulations of the voice which European nations employ only to express astonishment, disbelief, interrogation, and alarm, become in Burmese and other Indo-Chinese tongues a means for distinguishing between words of different meaning; and this peculiarity offers particular difficulties to the phlegmatic, monotonous-voiced Englishman. It does not simplify matters that Burmese is, of all these languages, the softest and most pliable, and has therefore received the title of the Italian of the Far East. The varying cadence of the sounds produces to the ear the semblance of a chant, and all the people seem to speak in a kind of rhythm, so that as long as a man has ideas, it is not [194] a very difficult matter to compose linga. But this only [195] renders it more puzzling to the Occidental, and accounts for the fact that very few Englishmen learn Burmese, and still fewer speak it well. Of the mercantile community not one in fifty has any knowledge of Burmese at all; and the civil officers, who have to pass examinations before they get 194 promotion, are but poor hands in conversation. The chief 876 reason of this is, of course, that the European is accustomed

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194 Pè with the light accent (cutting the sound short) means (1) the stern of a boat; (2) to steer; (3) to be broken off, to crumble. Pè, with the heavy accent, means (1) a measure of weight equal to six seeds of the *Abrus precatorius*; (2) any leguminous plant, such as bears seed in a pod, of which there are many varieties, including a pè-sa; (3) to put aside, reject; (4) madam, a familiar term applied by men to their intimate female friends; (5) a square measure of ground; (6) one of the four states of punishment. The last three usually have *a-* prefixed to them.

Hpè, with the light accent, means (1) to break off, as a small piece from a larger; (2) to separate and take a different course.

Hpè, with the heavy accent, means (1) satin; (2) a playing card, hpè-sa hpè-kye meaning to have shifting luck; (3) to get out of the way; (4) to remove. Kye hpè, derived from this, means to be splay-footed.

Thus we have nearly thirty separate meanings for a syllable which in rapid speaking seems, to an unpractised ear, to have throughout the same sound. This is philologically interesting, but practically it spoils the temper.

Myin means to see, high, and a horse; and to translate the sentence "I saw a high horse," and read the same aloud, is a good test of the knowledge of the arrangement of words, of the accent, and of the power of appreciating delicacies of pronunciation.

There are not very many Englishmen who can properly appreciate the difference in sound between kyaung, a cat, and kyaung, a monastery. They are apt to lose their temper when the lesson is many times repeated. Hundreds of other instances might be given, but they would only tire and perhaps frighten off those who do not know the language, and would certainly irritate those who have begun the study of it.

● 195 It is a common saying that you cannot pronounce Burmese properly till you take to betel-chewing. This may be called smart, or flippant rather than true. It is, however, undeniable that the practice of chewing renders it very much more difficult to catch the sound of a word. The result appears in the grotesque names which have been given to

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various places and things by old writers. Captain Hiram Cox persisted in calling the town-clerks mew-jerrys, which was neither a correct nor a dignified rendering of myosaye. Still the stately old king, Upa-Raza, had greater cause of complaint when he appeared in another book as "Upper Roger."

It is certain that in rapid talk, and among the lower classes, words do get softened down most remarkably. Nyaung-u, the great lacquer manufacturing town, dwindles away in the colloquial to Nyi-a-u, and the consequences are lamentably evident in the transliteration of its name in many English books. Similarly a youth named Tha Htun Aung will respond to the call of A-o-aw, but this hardly justifies the assertion that you do not need consonants in Burmese at all.

The orchestra plays as the initiates depart for the adjoining building to change into ordinary clothes, eat their last meal of the day, and bathe. Some guests now leave; borrowed articles, such as plates, cups and mats are gathered up for return to their owners, and eventually the orchestra departs. 881 796 792

The initiates return to the front of the building in which the ceremony took place. They sit on mats for the shaving of their heads. Two women hold a long piece of white cloth before them to catch the hair as several men proceed to wet their heads and shave them clean with straight razors. [302]

Once more the boys leave to bathe, then return and are seated before the chief monk. Their robes held in their hands before them, they recite prayers, give their robes to the monk, and ask him to dress them properly in the monkish garb.

Their robes donned, they squat before the monk and recite additional prayers, now following very carefully the special intonation appropriate to monks. The ceremony proper is complete. [195] ●

The following morning, early, a few relatives and close friends go to the monastery. The monks, including the novices, are offered food by them. A monk recites the Five-Fold Path, and then the ceremony of pouring water drop by drop is performed. Names are given the initiates -- special monastic names which they will bear only for the duration of their novitiate. [551]

In former times, and still today in the very remote villages of Burma, an initiate might spend many months, possibly several years, in the monkhood. Sometimes a boy would remain a monk for life. Today in Tadagale, as almost everywhere, initiates spend only a token period of about one week in the monkhood. During this time, they live the austere existence of the order, rising very early, spending long periods in prayer recitals, and abstaining from food after noon until the following morning. The short period of life as a novice is strongly in contrast with the easy-going, carefree childhood days that precede it. Some boys approach the time of their shinbyu with feelings of trepidation, and all are glad when the period spent in the monastery is over and they can return to the much less stern discipline of their parents. 881 792 188

Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the village find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality, in the company of others at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others, people assume that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as 'getting married.' Villagers find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis; such behavior is regarded as contrary to nature. But however much it occurs, unchaperoned association is not approved, much less encouraged. 584 831

Once a pair have decided they want to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, in a relatively small village such as Tadagale, something of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl, they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. Sometimes the approach to the girl's family is made directly; in other instances a female go-between will be employed. The latter is more likely when the girl's family 584

Nats' powers for good include protecting the village from dacoit attacks but does not extend to modern warfare. When the Japanese armies were slicing up through Tenasserim in 1941, the elders of Maung Maung Than's village prayed for nat protection against the invaders. The nats replied "Dear Villagers-we-ourselves are wearing raised longyis in this crisis (ready to run)." This is a Rangoon town joke told among the sophisticated collegiates at the University. Not so well defined, but still sensed is a growing distrust of the powers of nats to combat modern evils.

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The nats can best be visualized as supernatural despots each with his province (the home, village, sea, babies) and each exacting tribute of periodic or constant attention in the form of flowers or food, red and white cloth strips, and an altar which may have the image of the nat carved in wood (or moulded in modern plasticene). Banyan trees with their multiple, snake-like trunks, are the most common places of abode. When disaster in the form of sickness or other ill fortune strikes, the nats are appeased with offerings immediately. The SAY SAYA will frequently check with the family of his patient to make sure this has been done. In Rangoon and elsewhere, business men whose fortunes have been good are the main supporters of the nat festivals which are given for the entertainment of all the nats once a year in October, for a seven day period. NAT KADAW (nat-wives) are the mediums who contact the nats by becoming possessed by them at this festival and other special occasions (for a single nat) throughout the year. These are married women or more rarely homosexuals who dance, answer questions and give opinions when possessed.

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Punishment for offense against the nats is first shown by accidents or sudden illnesses like paralysis meted out to the offender. If the offender continues the village as a whole will gradually be afflicted. For example, when a drunkard offends the nats with blasphemous language evil falls on the entire village. Villagers led by the elders and a prominent NAT-KADAW go in a body to the major banyan tree shrine to have an understanding with the offended nats. Offerings are given and attention of the nats called to the woes of

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21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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536* 201 gesture passed on to the Burmese reproduction of the play. The rigid tradition soon called forth protests, if not in actual words, then in deeds. If the *Rama* play could not be changed to meet Burmese tastes, other plays would have to be invented. As a result, a native court drama came into being.[1]

4. The Burmese Court Drama

536* 175 644 538 It was during the reign of Hsinbyushin under whom the victories against the Siamese and the Chinese had been won, that the *Rama* play was first presented at court. He was succeeded by Singu, who was king from 1776 to 1782. Singu could appreciate and compose good poetry when sober, but such occasions were rare. All the same, the learned atmosphere of the court was maintained, for his queen, the daughter of the famous commander-in-chief who defeated the Siamese and the Chinese invaders, was an accomplished poet herself, and she ever encouraged the continued presentation of the Siamese *Rama* at court. Singu was followed by Bodawpaya (1782–1811), who was one of the strongest despots that ever sat on the Burmese throne. But his despotism was of the enlightened kind, and under his patronage, the learned atmosphere of the court remained unimpaired. The earlier half of his reign saw the rise of a Burmese court drama.

Some time about the year 1783, a young courtier came to the forefront of scholastic circles at the court. This young man, who was a typical product of the age of learning, which was also the age of triumph, had distinguished himself in various campaigns when he began his literary career by composing songs modelled on those of the Siamese *Rama*. He was essentially a scholar, learning and experimenting, and he was an accomplished student of literature, both ● [195] Burmese and foreign. But in spite of his great learning, he kept his own writings free from too rich an imagery and too bombastic a language; his Burmese was simple and pure. He wrote in the language of the court but without artificiality, so that his songs were not only admired at court, but understood and sung by the common people. After making his name as a song-writer, he produced various literary works of all kinds and thus enhanced his reputation, until he reached the zenith of his literary career in about the year 1785, when he composed and produced the first Burmese court play. This young

[1] Extracts from the *Ramayana*, *The Statue Play* attributed to Bhasa, and the Siamese-Burmese *Rama* play are given in appendix i.

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courtier later won fresh fame as a statesman and judge, becoming known to history as the Minister Myawaddi.[1]

As has been stated, there was at the Siamese court a companion play to *Rama*. It was known as *Aindarwuntha*. There was also a Siamese court romance of the same name and dealing with the same theme. Aindarwuntha was a prince-soldier, and he had two sets of adventures, one amorous and the other martial. Myawaddi was one of those who broke away from the tradition that the Siamese models at the Burmese court must be preserved without any substantial change. He did not want to have his hands tied through this tradition, and so he did not translate the play, *Aindarwuntha*, but translated instead the court romance. Then he dramatized the romance, and called his new play, not *Aindarwuntha* but *Eenaung*.[2] In *Eenaung*, Myawaddi rejects the heroic adventures and tells only of the hero-prince's romantic intrigues.

The play is far too long. The *Rama* play was long, too, and it took two or three days to present it entire. The court had all the leisure in the world. *Rama*, if translated, would require about 400 of these pages. *Eenaung* is longer; it would be about 600 pages. The play was written more to be read than acted, and as far as is known, it was never presented entire. Only some scenes were acted. The play on the whole is disjointed; it is merely a collection of scenes, connected only through the personality of the prince. As the adventures are purely amorous, there is no action at all. We are told occasionally that the prince has gone on a journey or that he has achieved a conquest, but the scene is always the palace. Following the Siamese style, music and song are important elements in the play, but dances and fine dresses are absent. It is not a masque.

The merit of the play lies in its language, dialogue, and characterization. It is the language of the court, refined and elegant as that of *Rama*. But a certain element of simplicity is in it, and it is not too rich in words or in imagery, so that the common people could understand and appreciate it; in short, the usual clear style of the author, which is the hall-mark of his other writings, is also found in this play. In dialogue, the play retains the freshness and liveliness of the *Rama* play. In characterization, the play is a great advance on *Rama*

[1] An account of his career is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 296.

[2] The play *Aindarwuntha* or *Eenaung* has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, on pp. 36 and 44–5.

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536* of the interlude were religious feast days, and out of respect for those occasions, the story had to be religious. Moreover, the interlude had to contend with the *Hawsa* or dramatic recitation by one person of a story, which was a rival in popularity; and all *Hawsas* were based on religious stories. However, the most important reason why the interlude had to depend again on the *Jatakas* for its stories was the great popularity of the works of U Awbatha.

Shin U Awbatha was a monk who lived during the reigns of Bodawpaya (1782–1819) and Bagyidaw (1819–37). He was a product of the age of learning. Famed for his piety, religious learning, and knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali, he chose, like his contemporaries, to write in Burmese, and he enriched Burmese prose. The prose before him had been much neglected. The scholars were more interested in verse. When they did write prose, they never succeeded in forgetting that they were essentially verse-writers, and they used rhymed, balanced, and measured phrases. They used too rich an imagery. They broke into verse when they wanted to express any intensity of feeling. Often they introduced Pali words into their writings when there were more suitable Burmese ones. Burmese prose before U Awbatha was in the same position as English prose before Dryden. U Awbatha introduced a prose which was expressive and clear, simple yet effective. It was used to convey varieties of feelings and emotions, but it was always kept restrained and was never allowed to lose its clearness. His works are still well known and popular. The importance of U Awbatha to Burmese language and literature can be judged from the fact that from the junior forms to the Honours course in Burmese at Rangoon University, his books are textbooks.[1]

There are hundreds of Birth Stories, but the most important are the *Ten Big Jatakas*. They are much longer than the rest. U Awbatha wrote Burmese prose versions of the eight longest of those. He followed closely the Pali originals as far as the incidents of the stories were concerned, but he portrayed character in detail, and made the characters more lifelike and therefore more interesting. The story was very well retold, but he was equally masterful in the portrayal of character and in his understanding of human psychology.

He wrote his first *Jataka* in 1785 when Burmese arms were flashing victorious in Assam and Manipur, but vainglorious references to contemporary events found no place in his works. In the peaceful

[1] A short account of U Awbatha is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 269.

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those ladies of the court, junior queens, who were indulging in romantic intrigues with courtiers. It is amusing to reflect that even as a monk, U Pon Nya himself was suspected of having had amorous adventures, and he lost his life through his friendship with the charming ladies of the governor's household. The first performance of the play was received with an uproar of protest on the part of the court-ladies, and they clamoured for the destruction of every copy of the play. But there was much that was new and interesting in it, and the general opinion was that a new dramatist of rich promise had arisen. Therefore the king, before whom the performance was made, did not yield to the clamours of the ladies, but ordered that their request to U Pon Nya asking him to write another play praising the virtues in women, should be complied with. As a result, he wrote *Waythandaya*.

The great merit of the play is in its lyrical qualities (which I am unable to reproduce in my translation). The vigour of the verse, its rhythm, the harmonious and elaborate rhyme scheme, the richness of the imagery, all join together to make this play the most lyrical in Burmese drama. However, these very qualities were the butt of criticism by contemporary critics who, used to the straightforward and clear style of U Kyin U and his imitators, held that too rich a language was a fault in a play, for there would be a danger of conveying wrong or obscure meanings to the audience. As those critics belonged to the 'people's' stage, they were of course thinking of the less learned audience outside the court circles. There is no doubt that in some scenes of *Paduma* the charge of difficulty and obscurity of language is quite justified. For example, when the crocodile and Paduma speak about women loving dogs and pigs, U Pon Nya is speaking only metaphorically, but one realizes it is so only on a second or third reading of the play. But the language in the scene where Paduma and his princess are running away to safety, is as clear as it is beautiful.[1]

3. *The Water-seller*

The story of this play also is taken unchanged from a *Jataka*. A prince returns to his city after a stay at a university in India. As he rests for a few minutes outside the gates, a water-seller enters, and in a soliloquy says that he is just entering the city to sell water and earn

[1] A translation of this play is given in appendix v.

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SCENE 7

OUTSIDE THE PALACE-WALLS

Enter KING *on one side.*

KING. Because I am the eldest son, I have ascended the throne of my father. I am determined to follow the tradition of my dynasty, and I will rule this kingdom with honour, flying the banner of justice and law. However, I do not know what the men and women of my city think. Do they praise me loudly? Or do they whisper my failings? Many events have happened since I was crowned king only this morning. I must know the opinion of my people. Therefore, I have come out of the palace, disguised as a poor labourer, so that I may wander in my city and listen to my people's gossip.

[*Enter* PARPAHEIN *on the other side.*]

PARPAHEIN. When I come to think of it, he is the ruler of this mighty realm. Still, my turn will come, and I shall be able to stand against his might. . . . Well, I suppose I must dare. I am alone, I am only a young prince. So what does it matter if I die? And if I live! I will be as sharp as a thorn, my glory will be as pointed as a spear. . . . I have been tattooed with magic charms; I now repeat the magic words to myself. [*A pause.*] Now I will jump and climb this wall. Steady on, my prince!

KING. Ah, as I walk disguised as a poor man, I see before me a nightman, a suspicious-looking person. He watches the palace-walls, and the palace drum has just struck the hour of midnight. He cannot be a very pure and law-abiding person. I will pretend that I do not see him. Hush! I will glance slyly and watch his movements.

PARPAHEIN. The time has come, the drum has struck the hour. I must scale the walls quickly and steal the magic weapons. This reminds me of the famous robber hero Ngatetpya, who raided even the palace in the kingdom of Sagaing.[1] I will dare as he dared. I am

[1] Sagaing, one of the many little kingdoms that came into being after the fall of Pagan, flourished from 1315 to 1364. Ngatetpya was a great philanthropist and built many monasteries and pagodas, which he always announced to have been 'built by public charity'. At night, disguised, he raided the houses of the wealthy, including the palace itself. He was not even suspected for the robberies until one night he met the king disguised as a robber. Ngatetpya asked the king to be his lieutenant, and together they raided many houses. They parted before dawn, but the king had by then recognized Ngatetpya. He was brought to trial the next day. The people, learning that the daring robberies were the work of one man, single-handed and unaided until he

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390. THE BURMAN BALLET (NAN-PWE).

date in the most fantastic way. The course of love is interrupted by all manner of vicissitudes — some grotesque, others of genuine pathos, to which the sentiment of the music is exquisitely adapted. The modulation of the vocal expression is much more subtle and intense than the expression of the features. Gesture is restricted to the conventional postures of the dance. The street or other open space is swept clear for the performance and laid with mats in the centre. A pavilion roof of bamboo is erected and covered with mats or thatch to keep off the sun by day and the dew by night; it is open at the sides. A space, twenty to thirty feet wide, is kept for the actors and musicians. The masks which will be worn in certain parts are hung out. Actors and actresses make up in public. There is a water-jar for the common use of actors and audience; both light their cheroots at the same lamps or torches. The spectators squat round the actors' circle, women and children in front, men standing behind. For the marionettes or *yotthé* a stage is erected. The entertainment goes on all night, frequently several nights in succession. The action of the play is slow, the dialogue is sung and spun out, with interludes of dancing and posturing, to the accompaniment of the music. There are breaks of spoken dialogue when the music stops, and the clowns indulge in banter, and set conundrums. The topical allusions are of a pungent description; the spice of coarseness is on a par with the taste of our Elizabethan public. The slightness of the distinctions of words makes the resources of *double entendre* especially rich, most of all when a foreigner, preferably from Europe, is brought on the scene. Peals of laughter proclaim these interludes from afar.

[195 522]

391. THE BURMAN BALLET (NAN-PWE).

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

The terseness of the language appears in its proverbs. 195

For instance, *Kwe-hlè hkaik yôn ma-tè*—"The dog-flea may jump but it raises no dust." Seven syllables as compared with the ten of the almost monosyllabic English. In the above sentence the order of ideas is much the same as our own. But as a rule the order is the opposite. "Fetch hither water to quench the fire" is *mî thagyo ye yaga*, literally, "fire to quench, water fetch hither." The ideas are expressed in order of their practical importance. The checked notes of the Burmese language give it an abruptness which is reflected in the *staccato* of the Burmese music. But Burmese possesses sonorous qualities also, for instance, *Shwe Sandaw Paya*, *Shwe Zigôn Paya*.

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The sounds of the letters used in this work for transliterating Burmese words are as follows:— 194

Vowel sounds.

a, a, i, o, u,	. . . . .	as in Italian
è	. . . . .	„ English *bell* (but long in quantity)
ai	. . . . .	„ „ *aisle*
au	. . . . .	„ „ *cow*
aw	. . . . .	„ „ *caw*
ei	. . . . .	„ „ *eight*
Consonants	. . . . .	„ English, including the *th*, emitting *f*, *v*, and *s*.

Few Burmans can pronounce *r*, and generally substitute *y* for it in the Pâli words. All final consonants are mute. They are not wholly suppressed as they are in French, but are merely checked in pronunciation. The Burmese for *demon* is written *nat* in this work, because it is too inconvenient to indicate the checked mute by such a form as *na't*. The final *n* should, strictly speaking, be always followed by a *g* or a suggestion of *g*, thus *dagdng* or *dagdn'* instead of *dagôn*. But to write it in this way is inconvenient in many of the combinations. This should accordingly be borne in mind. The combinative changes on the other hand which consonants undergo in certain positions have been incorporated in the spelling and not left to the reader to form. Instead of the current form *sit-kayin* (chess), which correctly renders the Burmese spelling of the word, the form *sittaing* is used, which renders the actual pronunciation. The letter *h* combined with *y* has a varying force according to its position. Thus *hye* is pronounced just as written, but in the duplicated form *hye-hye*, the pronunciation is *hye-shye*. There are a few exceptions such as *hsâ-hyî* (scissors) pronounced as spelled. When the *h* is aspirated, its combination with *y* gives *tsh* (English *ch*) and *dzh* (English *j*). *Kyaung* (a monastery) is pronounced as written. In the compound *taw-kyaung* it is pronounced *taw-chaung* (a forest monastery). But when it is the aspirated *h*, *taw-hkyaung* makes *taw-khaung* (a forest stream). The modulation of the voice differentiates it further, thus *taw-chaung*, with the second syllable rounded up sharply (*wâh cat*). In deliberate utterance certain of these modifications disappear again; just as we

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SEE. SADAW (p. 211).